

# THE 23

brought to you by  
Richard Harter, Alphonse, and the  
Large Orange and Blue  
Pussy Cat

---

*Mimeography by the pelgatic Pelz Press. Colophon typed at 5 Chauncy St. #2,  
Cambridge MA 02138.*

---

## *Comments on L-370.*

Jack Harness: Oh, I wasn't doubting that Goodman did sell you a soul of sorts. (Although I am glad to see you took precautions on checking it.) His usual procedure, at least while he was on the East Coast, was to doctor up very low grade souls. For a while his stock in trade was a copy of Captain Marvel #3, which he would let 15 year old comix fans read in exchange for their souls. (well actually it was a counterfeit copy of Captain Marvel, but that's another story.) With the aid of a crotchety BNF of yesteryear he would skillfully alter them until they were scarcely distinguishable from the real thing. The real trick, which he has never revealed, was how he got the soul of a 15 year old comix fan to shrivel down to the size of that of a Trufan's.

Bruce Duncan: Odds and ends - I was reading recently (I believe in Playboy) that people are reporting car trouble on some of the LA freeways during rush hour because of the low oxygen content in the air. I am told a 747 must dump fuel if it is to land before the completion of its trip because of the way it is designed.

I have a feeling that the whole "thermal pollution" bit is rather much of a red herring. The worst you can say about thermal pollution is that it raises the water temperature over a relatively small area (geographically speaking) and thus alter the local ecology. I would consider one medium size town dumping its raw sewage into the local river is a far more serious offender than all of the thermal pollution from all of the nuclear power plants. Warm water, after all, is quite hospitable to life whereas modern industrial sludge can kill anything. (Er, that should be hospitable.)

Larry Nielson: When I first read it I was quite impressed by The Cold Equations. In retrospect, however, I am much less impressed. The story is a powerful embodiment of a statement about life in a particular situation. My first bone to pick with the story is that I don't believe the technical situation. That is I don't believe that it would be impossible to eliminate enough other mass so that the stowaway could be saved. I refuse to believe that any rational society would design and use a ship with that fine a margin of safety. Now this is not just a quibble about believability - it is also a quarrel with the thesis being presented in the story which might be summarized somewhat as follows: The Universe Doesn't Care. In our warm nests we can get by on human values but in the stark reality Out There we live and die by The Cold Equations, the merciless and unforgiving reality of things as they really are. (Would you believe I just compressed 20 years of Campbell editorials in one sentence?) But it aint so. Oh, it's true enough that the Universe doesn't care and that we do live and die by the cold equations. However we shape and select our environment. The universe doesn't care if we arrange our environment so that it is to our benefit. The cold equations don't demand that we live on the edge of danger, that we arrange things so that there is no margin of safety. They will exact their price if we

do, but they don't demand it. The main emphasis of the story is on the tragedy of the inevitable and unavoidable death. The idea that things had to be that way for unavoidable economic reasons is gently slid in as background propaganda. The story is a good story, but I also feel it is a propaganda piece for those who suggest that someone else's death or suffering was an unavoidable tragic consequence of THE WAY THINGS ARE rather than an entirely avoidable consequence of somebody else arranging things to their own selfish convenience.

Mike Glycer: Your comments deserve a reply but lots of names don't spring to mind, so you may be right. I will have to dig through the stacks of fanzines. Sorry, I'll try to comment to you next time.

Elst: Oh but that's cheating. Remember Lincoln and the cow.

Vixen: I'm afraid that most of my correspondents are more concerned whether I write at all or not and not whether I first draft. I tried to be very poor at keeping up on my correspondence. It is traditional in NESFA business meetings that I vote no on any motion that would otherwise pass unanimously (particularly ones that I make.) It is widely believed that the reason I do this is so that my name will get in the minutes and thus my mother (who is a corresponding member) will know that I am still alive. In fact some clerks have included "Hi, June" as part of the minutes. Sigh!!

I was going to defend my statement about the missionary position being the most natural, etc. , thought of a number of things that could be said, and decided that, yes, it is a little difficult to go into the matter thoroughly in a family apa. Oh well, I will be out at LACon. Perhaps we can debate the topic there.

I found it very interesting that your Psych class regards McGovern is a big phony. (I have a vested interest - mostly because I have a good sized bet on him. This is not an expression of preference, just my considered political judgement.)

Bill Warren: I haven't seen "Arnie" so I can't tell. (I don't own a TV.) However I shouldn't be surprised if it were part of the continuing class war of the intelligensia against the business (capitalist) class. There is such a war, you know, although it is mostly not perceived as such by the intelligensia. Someone, Schumpeter I believe, predicts that the capitalist class will eventually be destroyed by the intelligensia by the long run process of subverting its values.

Fred Patten: That's a shame. Your tale of detonating snails in your boyhood is one of the more improbable and mind boggling things I have ever heard. And did you read Pohl's afterthoughts on The Space Merchants?

John Hertz: In MITSFS there used to be a RISK player who would plunk his troops in Afghanistan and just sit there. It was observed that if you held Afghanistan for the duration of the game you must inevitably win the game which is the source of the old MITSFS saying - He who rules Afghanistan shall rule the world. Bear it in mind.

Goodman: But would editing Shaggy provide power, either in Fandom generally or in LASFS? I doubt that publishing a fanzine provides much power within a club power in a club depends too strongly on immediate personal relationships. Pubbing a zine is not a source of power in general Fandom unless it is extraordinarily successful.